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Mid-Decade review of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/237.

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Mid-Decade review of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014

Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Summary

The present report, prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), presents a mid-Decade review of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and information on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 57/254, 58/219 and 59/237. It reviews the work undertaken by UNESCO, the United Nations system, Member States, civil society organizations and other key stakeholders in implementing the Decade and enhancing education for sustainable development, including progress made, obstacles faced and needs arising, and makes recommendations to maintain visibility and momentum on this subject between the midpoint and the completion of the Decade.

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I. Introduction

A. Background information

1. In December 2002, the General Assembly, by its resolution 57/254, declared 2005-2014 the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the critical role of education in achieving sustainable development. It also entrusted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the responsibilities of lead agency, global coordinator and promoter of the Decade. Japan was the main sponsor of the General Assembly resolution adopting the Decade.

2. The Decade, which aims to integrate the principles, practices and values of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, was launched by the Director-General of UNESCO at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 1 March 2005. A series of regional and national launches of the Decade followed in different parts of the world.[1]

3. The Decade was initiated to stimulate Governments to renew their educational policies and practices in line with the tenets of sustainable development. In its resolution 58/219 the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance of education for sustainable development and invited countries to promote public awareness of and wider participation in the Decade, including through cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders.

4. The present document is prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 59/237, in which the Assembly requested UNESCO to present a mid-term review of the implementation of the Decade to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

B. Global context

5. The global financial and economic crises, together with other crises linked to climate change, food and energy, have demonstrated the need for viable, long-term solutions,[2] giving new relevance to debates on how education should respond to changing realities and contribute to a better future. Education for sustainable development lies at the heart of these debates.

6. Building green economies and sustainable societies requires more than clean technologies. We will not solve today's problems with the same values and approaches that created them. A key advantage of the concept of sustainable development is that, through its social, economic and environmental pillars as well as its cultural and ethical dimensions, global challenges are understood in all their complexity. Climate change presents a case in point. In recent years the debate over climate change has drawn on scientific evidence regarding the impact of human activities on global warming, highlighting the fact that the root causes of climate change (economic development models, industrialization, urbanization, consumption and lifestyle patterns, etc.), its effects (increased scarcity of resources, flows of refugees, etc.) and the means for its mitigation (international conventions

[1] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001540/154093e.pdf.

[2] See 35 C/INF.11, 35 C/INF.27 and 35 C/INF.33.

on carbon emissions, national green taxes, awareness-raising programmes, etc.) are not only environmental. For this reason, UNESCO is promoting education for sustainable development as the best approach for addressing climate change issues.[3]

7. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development must be seen in the framework of the wider development agenda. The reporting year for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, 2015, will be crucial.[4] Education for sustainable development is closely linked to Millennium Development Goal 2 (on primary education), Millennium Development Goal 7 (on environmental sustainability) and Millennium Development Goal 8 (on a global development partnership), but it also contributes to the achievement of the other Goals. It is important, however, to recognize that education for sustainable development is a long-term endeavour that will continue far beyond the end of the Decade.

8. Education for sustainable development is a transformative learning process. It promotes a sense of both local and global responsibility, encourages future-oriented and critical thinking, integrates traditional knowledge, builds recognition of global interdependence and promotes reflection on new lifestyles that combine well-being, quality of life and respect for nature and other people.

II. Frameworks and mechanisms to guide the Decade

9. As the lead agency for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO has two interrelated roles to play: (a) at the global level and; (b) at the agency level. At the global level, UNESCO plays the role of leader in order to catalyse, coordinate and lend support to the international community. At the agency level, UNESCO acts as a contributing implementer of the Decade. To achieve this broad mandate, UNESCO has set up various processes and mechanisms, both external, to guide and mobilize the global process, and internal, to provide advice within the organization itself.

A. Mechanisms to facilitate UNESCO's global leadership role

International implementation scheme for the Decade

10. In order to provide guidance and technical support to countries in achieving the goals of the Decade, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/254, UNESCO led the preparation, through a wide-ranging consultative process, of an international implementation scheme,[5] which was adopted by its Executive Board in 2005. The scheme provides a broad framework under which all stakeholders can make their varied contributions and outlines UNESCO's leadership tasks, lists key milestones and describes ways forward. It summarizes the goals and objectives of the Decade and its relationship with other key educational and development-related movements such as the Millennium

[3] See also UNESCO's Strategy for Action on Climate Change (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001627/162715e.pdf).

[4] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[5] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001403/140372e.pdf.

Development Goals, the Education for All initiative and the United Nations Literacy Decade.

Advisory and coordination mechanisms

11. In addition to the international implementation scheme a number of advisory and coordination mechanisms have been established to facilitate UNESCO's global leadership role. The high-level panel on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, convened by the Director-General to provide strategic advice and guidance, assists UNESCO in mobilizing support at the highest levels and guides the organization's strategy for mobilizing resources and partners.

12. UNESCO is a member of the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development which seeks to ensure harmonious international coordination of activities of the Decade within the United Nations system, to embed the Education for Sustainable Development agenda in the work of United Nations agencies in a coherent and timely manner and to emphasize the role of education for sustainable development and its implications for all forms of education. Membership of the Committee also includes the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations University.

13. Internally, the secretariat for the Decade, which is based in the UNESCO Education Sector, offers oversight, advice, backstopping and coordination support to different programmes and thematic areas while helping to ensure the coherence of in-house activities. The reference group for the Decade, whose members are leading experts and researchers in this field, assists the secretariat in strategic thinking for future action and the coordination and mobilization of partners. The secretariat is also supported by the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group, which provides guidance on the implementation of the global Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Decade. Finally, a working group of UNESCO chairs for education for sustainable development was established in 2009 to further capitalize on the expertise of the Chairs and the University Twinning and Network scheme (UNITWIN) and to reinforce the contribution of the UNESCO Chairs to the Decade.

B. Mechanisms to facilitate UNESCO's contribution to the Decade

14. As a result of in-house consultation, a broad-based, intersectoral UNESCO action plan for the Decade was approved in March 2007 by the Intersectoral Working Group (set up by the Director-General to achieve a "one UNESCO" approach to the Decade).

15. Building on these developments, an intersectoral platform on education for sustainable development was established in 2008 to harness and improve existing mechanisms and frameworks to support the creation of an enabling environment so that sustainable development values and practices may be successfully embedded in all types of educational processes — formal, non-formal and informal.

16. UNESCO's multisectoral capacities give it a comparative advantage in advocating education for sustainable development in a holistic perspective. Led by the Education Sector of UNESCO, the intersectoral platform attracts substantial

contributions from all programme sectors of the organization and many field offices. The platform seeks complementarities with other intersectoral platforms related to sustainable development and promotes greater coherence in UNESCO's contribution to sustainable development through education for sustainable development. The platform also takes advantage of the advisory, consultation and coordination mechanisms established to facilitate UNESCO's global leadership role for the Decade.

C. Selected UNESCO actions

17. UNESCO has helped catalyse and coordinate efforts in education for sustainable development at national, regional and global levels, providing a vision, engaging the international community at various levels and defining ways forward. UNESCO is providing advice on regional and national planning, on implementation and evaluation efforts and on strengthening regional networking and collaboration. UNESCO regional education bureaux have played a key role in strengthening regional collaboration networks and building greater awareness and understanding of education for sustainable development. For example, the UNESCO regional bureau for education in Bangkok has established an Asia-Pacific regional inter-agency committee and has organized a number of consultations to help implement and monitor the Asia-Pacific strategy on education for sustainable development.

18. At the national level, cluster and field offices help countries to implement education for sustainable development. For example, the UNESCO office in Brasilia has cooperated with the Brazilian Government's educational development plan to strengthen educational policies and practices aimed at the development of programmes, including education for sustainable development organized around four axes: basic education; higher education; vocational education; and literacy.

19. As a vital link between UNESCO programmes, national institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society at large on various issues related to education for sustainable development, UNESCO national commissions[6] have been key partners in implementing activities for the Decade at the national level. Some commissions have played advisory and advocacy roles which others have helped to initiate the establishment of national Decade committees, including liaising or being members of them. National commissions have also provided a link or interface with Governments, informing and influencing decision makers, including ministers of education, science, culture, environment, trade and finance. In addition, some national commissions help by strengthening international cooperation towards the development of innovative policies, programmes and practices relating to education for sustainable development.

20. UNESCO has been assisting countries in assessing the extent to which sustainability is already part of different levels of education, and it is working with planners to reorient education policies in line with perceived needs. An example of a

[6] UNESCO is the only United Nations agency to have a global network of national cooperating bodies known as national commissions. Acting as agencies of consultation, liaison and information, and mobilizing and coordinating partnerships with civil society, the national commissions also make substantial contributions to the advancement of UNESCO's objectives and the implementation of its programme.

regional level mapping activity is the situational analysis of education for sustainable development in Central Asia,[7] prepared by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia in cooperation with and the support of the regional office of UNESCO in Bangkok and the UNESCO office in Almaty. In addition, UNESCO has undertaken efforts to sensitize key decision makers across Government Ministries, as well as businesses, non-governmental organizations and community organizations, of the "value-added" of education for sustainable development as a critical element for more sustainable societies. Efforts to enhance global advocacy of the vision of the Decade and communicate the importance of education for sustainable development to different national stakeholders are ongoing through conferences, workshops and training events and by collecting examples of good practices.

21. To promote the vision of a sustainable society, UNESCO has prepared a variety of web-based tools, information and print materials. Additional vision-building has taken place through school contests, awards, education for sustainable development-related projects (essays, debates and income-generating projects) as well as joint school and community initiatives on the goals of the Decade.

22. The UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network[8] (8,500 schools in 180 countries) undertakes regional and international intercultural projects within the framework of the Decade (including the Baltic Sea Project, the Great Volga River Route Project and the Western Mediterranean Sea Project). Such activities encourage a deeper understanding of the principal issues associated with sustainable development, such as poverty, environmental degradation, population growth and urban and rural transformation, as well as issues of health and cultural diversity.

23. Partnerships have been established and synergies created among initiatives and programmes. UNESCO has entered into a number of partnerships or joint actions with other United Nations agencies (in particular with UNEP and UN-Habitat through official agreements), civil society partners, the private sector, media professionals and faith-based organizations to mobilize all stakeholders in promoting and implementing the various dimensions of the Decade.

III. Mid-Decade review process

24. The mid-way point of the Decade, 2009, marked an opportune time not only for taking stock of all that had been achieved but also for aligning strategies with emerging concerns and challenges. The process of reflection was started as early as November 2007, at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Education, "Environmental Education Towards a Sustainable Future — Partners for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development", in Ahmedabad, India, and evolved through a series of international or regional conferences aimed at assessing progress in implementing the goals of the Decade and at gathering recommendations from a range of stakeholders. This process led to the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, "Moving into the Second Half of the Decade" held in Bonn, Germany[9] from 31 March to 2 April 2009.

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[7] http://www.carec.kz/English/2.Programmes/1.IP/publication/brochure/Situational_Analysis.pdf.

[8] http://www.unesco.org/en/aspnet/.

[9] See 179 EX/INF.4 Rev., 180 EX/5 (Part IX), 181 EX/5 Add.1 and 181 EX/INF.15.

A. The 2009 mid-Decade review conference

25. The UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development was the key moment in the mid-decade review process. The Bonn Conference provided an opportunity to examine the contribution of education for sustainable development to efforts to achieve quality education for all, provide a platform for international exchange on the subject, review progress achieved and identify directions for the remaining years of the Decade. The conference was a major success, attended by 900 participants from 147 countries, in particular 47 ministers and deputy ministers of education, and including official Government representation from 123 UNESCO Member States (including three associate Members). The Conference concluded with the adoption of the Bonn Declaration.[10]

B. Monitoring and evaluation process

26. The *Review of Contexts and Structures for Education for Sustainable Development*, the UNESCO global report on learning for a sustainable world, issued in 2009, was presented and discussed at the Bonn Conference. The report presents a succinct yet insightful overview of the contexts in which regions and countries around the world are trying to develop education for sustainable development and related forms of education and learning. The report, the result of the completion of the first phase of a monitoring and evaluation process set up by UNESCO in 2007, informs the content of the present document.

27. The monitoring and evaluation process is guided by the global monitoring and evaluation framework developed by the UNESCO-convened Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group together with the secretariat for the Decade. It comprises three phases that span the Decade:

(a) Phase I: 2007-2009, focusing on contexts and structures of work on education for sustainable development;

(b) Phase II: 2009-2011, focusing on processes and learning for education for sustainable development;

(c) Phase III: 2011-2014, focusing on the impacts and outcomes of the Decade.

28. UNESCO is publishing a series of three reports corresponding to the three phases in 2009, 2011 and 2015, respectively.

C. Key findings of the monitoring and evaluation process

29. Progress made and obstacles encountered during the first five years in establishing provisions, strategies, mechanisms and contexts that support the development and implementation of education for sustainable development are discussed below.[11]

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[10] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001887/188799e.pdf.

[11] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001877/187757e.pdf.

Meaning

30. Regional, national and local differences influence the meaning of education for sustainable development. The importance of interconnections between the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions of development should be the common thread that runs through all education and learning for sustainable development.

National coordination bodies

31. A national coordination body for education for sustainable development is vital to its implementation in each country. Many countries reported the presence of a national coordination body. Although there has been a rapid rise in the creation of national coordination bodies, more insight and thought needs to be given to the processes that lead to their creation and the role they are to play.

Interdepartmental cooperation within Governments

32. Most countries reported a lack of a centralized body to facilitate interdepartmental cooperation on education for sustainable development within the Government structure. This may be the result of insufficient experience in cross-boundary thinking among policymakers. Nonetheless, many responding countries reported an increase in efforts to establish such linkages between ministries and other stakeholders.

National policy documents

33. The presence of education for sustainable development in a wide range of national policy documents is notable. In most cases, the subject is integrated into national educational policies and curricula at the primary and secondary levels of education, although it also appears in national environmental and sustainable development policies. The presence of specific policies or strategies on education for sustainable development is not common in most countries. To that end, international and regional impetus is needed to encourage countries to develop specific policies and strategies in this field, and to ensure their implementation.

Formal education

34. Government support for the inclusion of education for sustainable development in formal education, especially at the primary and secondary levels, indicates progress in most countries. Inserting sustainability issues into existing curricula, adopting new approaches to learning and redesigning curricula are some of the ways countries have integrated the subject in formal educational settings. Inclusion of education for sustainable development is evident in teacher education, higher education and technical and vocational education and training; however, there seems to be little support for it in early childhood education.

Non-formal education and informal learning

35. With regard to education for sustainable development in non-formal and informal education, there is little information available on issues such as availability of funds, the target audience envisaged for related activities or the manner in which available resources, in print and in digital form, are used and distributed. New

approaches are needed in order to find solutions to these challenges and clarify the importance of lifelong learning.

Research, development and dissemination

36. Research and development in the field of education for sustainable development needs more attention in most parts of the world: research scholarships on the subject are far from common and there is little financial support for innovation and capacity-building. Given the sharp rise in interest in education for sustainable development, national Governments should support the development of quality assessment schemes for it.

Networking

37. There is evidence of a remarkable increase in networking on the issue of education for sustainable development both regionally and internationally, including networking by universities, national and local governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Funding for education for sustainable development

38. Findings indicate that, in most countries, public budgets and/or economic incentives for education for sustainable development are minimal. Governments are aware, however, of the importance of raising money to support activities and projects in this field in order to ensure the successful implementation of the goals of the Decade. Countries are beginning to take financing and budgeting for education for sustainable development into consideration across ministries by determining how it aligns with key documents in different sectors to facilitate coordinated funding and intersectoral programming at the national level.

United Nations cooperation and contribution to the Decade

39. The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is a United Nations endeavour, involving a number of United Nations agencies. Launches of the Decade at the international, regional, national and local levels, workshops and meetings and numerous publications on the subject are some of the numerous activities and initiatives undertaken by United Nations agencies within the framework of the Decade. The United Nations University's growing network of regional centres of expertise[12] and the "Mainstreaming environment and sustainability in Africa"[13] programme launched by UNEP, in cooperation with UNESCO, to integrate education for sustainable development in African universities are notable examples of such activities. Much work remains to be done, however, before a concerted "delivering as one" response becomes a reality. Reinforced financial and human resources would support and promote implementation of activities and initiatives for the Decade.

[12] http://www.ias.unu.edu.

[13] http://www.unep.org/training/index.asp.

D. The way forward

40. The monitoring and evaluation review process identified 10 areas calling for further action in the remaining half of the Decade.

1. Promoting awareness of education for sustainable development

41. Education for sustainable development needs to be communicated in a simple yet creative manner to help people identify with it and understand it. In this regard, the media involvement is essential to promote critical thinking on the subject. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in a creative manner should also be encouraged to raise awareness about education for sustainable development.

2. Reorienting curricula, teaching and learning

42. Strengthening and promoting sustainable development-related capacities, including critical thinking, problem-solving and understanding complexities, need innovative methodologies. On the one hand, schools of education, curriculum development institutes and educational research institutes should be encouraged to identify and develop new forms of teaching and learning. On the other, educational policies that allow for these new forms of teaching and learning should be promoted and strengthened.

3. Developing capacity for education for sustainable development

43. Professional development should focus on building the capacities of a wider range of audiences, enhancing new forms of learning in schools, universities, neighbourhoods and workplaces inspired by education for sustainable development. Capacity-building in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings at the local, national, regional and international levels should be encouraged.

4. Supporting research, monitoring and evaluation

44. Support for research on education for sustainable development is vital. Such research should be based on the theoretical underpinnings and critical discourse on the subject, including: analysis of elements and efforts that support or obstruct such education; analysis of its contribution to the educational community and to the sustainability of society; use of data derived from research on education for sustainable development to inform decisions; and tracking progress of the Decade. Research in non-formal and informal education should be equally strengthened and international donors and national research foundations should be encouraged to support research in this field.

5. Establishing synergy with other specialized areas of education

45. The call for greater articulation and synergy between environmental education and education for sustainable development should also be extended to other specialized areas of education. Synergies between education for sustainable development and education focusing, inter alia, on peace, gender, inclusive learning and health, should be created and promoted.

6. Creating resources and materials

46. While some reference materials are available, overall resources on education for sustainable development are insufficient. Teaching and learning methods that focus on the subject should be developed and additional tools produced and made available in multiple languages. The use of ICT should be promoted to reach out to a wider audience. Knowledge-sharing platforms and open-source resources (for example, "wiki" websites) could be used to facilitate access to such materials.

7. Strengthening international and regional cooperation

47. Interregional and intraregional networking is vital to the advancement of the agenda on education for sustainable development. Cooperation between the developed and the developing countries should be encouraged and promoted actively. Strengthening existing regional networks and initiating the creation of new ones should be a priority issue on regional cooperation agendas. Regional strategies should be subject to regular review in order to reflect changing regional priorities in this field, and regional stakeholders should be encouraged to contribute to regional strategies.

8. Strengthening national networking

48. Establishing and strengthening networks on education for sustainable development at national and local levels should be actively encouraged. Sustainable development commissions or sustainable development agreements could serve as effective mechanisms to provide impetus to the creation of national networks. National networks should include local and indigenous perspectives on sustainable development, thereby facilitating the active participation of marginalized communities and indigenous groups in educational processes.

9. Reinforcing coordination

49. Intersectoral synergy and improved coordination among various ministries and levels of Government are vital to the promotion of education for sustainable development at the national level. Coordination among stakeholders is also very important for the creation and promotion of national strategies and frameworks that support education for sustainable development.

50. Within the United Nations system, cross-boundary, "outside the box" thinking is needed to provide a concerted "Delivering as one" response to the Decade. To that end, inter- and intra-agency coordination and collaboration should be a priority.

10. Increasing financing for education for sustainable development

51. Raising funds for activities and projects is a vital element in ensuring the successful completion of the Decade. Multilateral and bilateral donors and the private sector have the potential to be important contributors. Education for sustainable development should be part of national agendas, and should be integrated into budgetary frameworks, national development plans and national sustainable development strategies, including the budgetary frameworks of all relevant ministries.

IV. Regional challenges and opportunities

52. All regions have developed regional strategies (or frameworks) for the Decade.[14] Many countries and organizations, on their own initiative and in response to UNESCO's advocacy efforts, have already launched national plans, curriculum changes, indicator identification and advocacy campaigns. The 2009 UNESCO global report on learning for a sustainable world also identified specific regional challenges and opportunities, which are presented below.

A. Africa

53. The Africa region launched the Decade and its regional Strategy of Education for Sustainable Development for Sub-Saharan Africa[15] at the biennial meeting of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa in Libreville in March 2006. The ministerial statement of commitment and call for support and action on the strategy underlined the importance of ensuring that "African cultures, knowledge systems, languages, ways of life are integrated into frameworks, programmes and activities developed within the Decade".

54. In Africa, reorienting education towards sustainable development requires that education be made more relevant to development and poverty alleviation goals. Key challenges include the need to recognize that human development is closely linked to health and well-being, capacity development, knowledge and living standards, the fact that most Africans live in rural areas and the continuing severe impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

55. Actions should develop synergies between schools and communities, realign education with African culture, knowledge and contexts and stimulate creative thinking on sustainable economic models and social responses to changes in culture, social structures and lifestyles, including through ongoing United Nations initiatives such as Education for All, the United Nations Literacy Decade, the UNAIDS Global Initiative on Education and HIV and AIDS and the Millennium Development Goal process.

B. Arab region

56. The launch of the Decade in the Arab region took place in Bahrain in September 2005. Countries in the region have undertaken exchanges and dialogue in order to define the roles of different stakeholders for the Decade and elaborate a regional framework on the education for sustainable development for the Arab States.[16]

57. In the Arab States, challenges to implementing education for sustainable development include the need for: better understanding of how it links with other cross-cutting themes in education; integration of the values and traditions of the Arab States in the planning and implementation of education for sustainable development, in particular the development of curricula and teaching materials;

[14] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001849/184944e.pdf, chap. 11.

[15] http://www.dakar.unesco.org/news/pdf07/observatory_strat.pdf.

[16] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001619/161944m.pdf.

sufficient and appropriate funding and training; and the promotion of equal partnerships and improved cooperation among all partners.

58. Education for sustainable development in the region is focused primarily on environmental issues and has a stronger presence in formal education than in informal education. Policymakers, administrators and teachers must be given more opportunity to make changes, experiment and take risks in order to achieve new educational and sustainability goals.

C. Asia and the Pacific

59. The Asia-Pacific regional implementation strategy[17] was presented at the regional launch in Nagoya, Japan, in June 2005. The UNESCO office in Bangkok facilitated the drafting and finalization of the strategy, based on the results of a situational analysis of education for sustainable development in the region. The strategy is open to revision according to the changing needs of stakeholders and emerging issues in the region throughout the Decade.

60. A Pacific education for sustainable development framework,[18] serving as the coordinating mechanism for the implementation of education for sustainable development in the Pacific, was endorsed by the Pacific Education Ministers Meeting in Nadi, Fiji, on 21 and 22 September 2006. It acts as an umbrella for coordinated and collaborative action to achieve the region's vision to integrate and mutually reinforce the three pillars of economic development, social development and environmental conservation. The development of local ownership respecting local context and culture is an important aspect of implementation of the education for sustainable development at all levels.

61. Challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific region include political and economic crises as well as natural disasters. Development strategies will have to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and address the issue of food insecurity. Climate change is an issue that involves cross-sectoral political engagement and willing partners. Supporting countries in integrating disaster prevention and preparedness into national policies is a route to reforming educational systems. Measures to achieve gender equality can address a range of entrenched inequalities in education systems and promote more sustainable approaches.

62. Asia-Pacific countries are beginning to identify clear thematic national sustainable development priorities, building inter-ministerial support and discussing financing. Continuing problems include ethnic, religious and linguistic barriers, the loss of indigenous and traditional knowledge, low rates of adult literacy, unachieved universal primary education in parts of the region and inadequate funding for the education of marginalized groups. These matters must be considered when interpreting progress and planning activities on education for sustainable development in the region.

[17] http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esd/documents/esd_publications/working-paper.pdf.

[18] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001476/147621e.pdf.

D. Europe and North America

63. Under the leadership of the Economic Commission for Europe, a regional strategy was prepared to facilitate the introduction and promotion of education for sustainable development. The strategy[19] was adopted on 18 March 2005 at the high-level meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe, in Vilnius, to launch the Decade in the region. It not only places education for sustainable development high on the political agenda but is also the driving force for creating structures and provisions for it in the region. It will be necessary to strengthen existing regional and subregional alliances and networks working on education for sustainable development; to encourage twinning programmes, bilateral cooperation and partnerships; and to use existing international legally binding instruments, such as the Aarhus Convention[20] and other relevant agreements.

64. A key regional challenge is the lack of capacity to implement education for sustainable development in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner. This was recognized as a persistent bottleneck by Ministers of Education and of the Environment in Belgrade in 2007.[21] Other challenges include the absence of a consensus on what education for sustainable development means; confusion regarding the differences between environmental education and education for sustainable development; the need to adapt legislative and policy frameworks to integrate education for sustainable development; lack of appropriate teaching tools and research; and the need to strengthen civil society involvement in governance at multiple levels including schools, the community, regionally and nationally.

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

65. The launch of the Decade in Latin America took place during the Ibero-American Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro from 31 May to 2 June 2005. The launch of the Decade in the Caribbean took place during the conference "Education for Sustainable Development: New Approaches for the Future", held in Kingston in October 2005.

66. At the strategy-building conference, "Building education for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean", held in San José in 2006, UNESCO and the Earth Charter both stressed the need for the development of a regional strategy for the Decade in the Latin American[22] and the Caribbean region. In the region, education for sustainable development is based on a shared vision that education policies should contribute to counteracting acute processes of environmental damage and destruction and building just societies.

67. UNESCO is called on to forge synergies with other multilateral agencies and bilateral agencies. Activities for the Decade must be coordinated with ongoing programmes such as the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Latin American and Caribbean Programme on Environmental Education. The Education for All Dakar Framework for Action and Millennium Development Goals are also fundamental.

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[19] http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2005/cep/ac.13/cep.ac.13.2005.

[20] http://www.unece.org/env/pp/.

[21] http://www.unece.org/env/esd/belgrade.htm.

[22] http://www.oei.es/decada/portadas/estrategiaregional.htm.

V. Looking ahead: the second half of the Decade

68. Findings and recommendations from the mid-Decade review process and the recommendations from the Bonn Declaration constitute the basis for the way forward during the second half of the Decade and beyond.

69. The Bonn Declaration[10] provides a strategic orientation for the second half of the Decade, attesting the importance of education for sustainable development in the world today. It calls for making a compact with the global movement for the Decade aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competencies and strengthening values and attitudes oriented towards a transition to a more just, fair and viable world.

70. The Bonn Declaration was drafted through a transparent, inclusive, participatory and results-oriented approach to ensure its relevance for education for sustainable development and the Decade. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of education for the global development agenda and underlines the essential contribution to be made by education for sustainable development to shaping the purpose, content and quality of all education. Written jointly with representatives of Member States, it clearly states what countries should be involved in as well as the areas in which they should enhance their support for the Decade.

UNESCO strategy for the second half of the Decade

71. In order to maintain visibility and momentum between the midpoint and the completion of the Decade, UNESCO has developed a strategy for the second half of the Decade, built on the Bonn Declaration and the international implementation scheme, and drawing on the findings of the first phase of the Decade. The full version of the draft strategy, which will be examined by UNESCO's Executive Board at its upcoming session in October 2010, will be available on the UNESCO website in September 2010.

72. Developed through a multi-stakeholder consultative process, the strategy aims to support the efforts of Member States and other stakeholders to address global sustainable development challenges through education for sustainable development. Through the strategy, UNESCO will strive to stimulate fresh initiatives, promote new forms of cooperation, boost the spread of good practices and place emphasis on enhancing partnerships to better mobilize and engage with key stakeholder groups. It provides a set of focused priorities through which UNESCO will promote the further integration of education for sustainable development into all types and settings of education at all levels, in the following four key areas of strategic action:

(a) Enhancing synergies with different educational and development initiatives;

(b) Developing and strengthening capacities for education for sustainable development;

(c) Building, sharing and applying knowledge related to education for sustainable development;

(d) Advocating education for sustainable development and increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of sustainability.

73. A key moment, marking the conclusion of the Decade, will be the end-of-decade conference in 2014 to be organized by Japan in cooperation with UNESCO.

This will provide an opportunity to take stock of achievements during the Decade and explore how to continue the work of this global movement in favour of education and learning for sustainability in future years. An end-of-decade report will be presented to the General Assembly in 2015.

VI. Conclusion

74. Given its ambitious goals, the Decade has raised high expectations among the countries and stakeholders who seek to promote and develop education for sustainable development. The Decade offers countries the opportunity to rethink and reorient various dimensions of education and skills training so that learners, and their communities, are empowered to imagine and devise sustainable local solutions to development problems. As countries strive to integrate education for sustainable development into already existing frameworks, they should work to clearly and objectively state not only their specific goals for the Decade, but also their vision of education for sustainable development and what it means in their specific country context.

75. Since the Decade concerns everyone within society, it is up to everyone to contribute, in ways large and small, to changes in thinking, values, attitudes and behaviours conducive to achieving sustainable development. Many countries have responded enthusiastically to implementing the goals of the Decade. However, given the diversity and disparity of economic and social situations at the regional, national and local levels, it is evident that not all countries have achieved the same level of progress.

76. As lead agency and international coordinator of the Decade, UNESCO is committed to serving as a change agent, through education, to mobilize countries, partners, communities and individuals to implement the Decade, as well as to further encourage the United Nations family to support countries and stakeholders in their efforts to promote its vision and goals. Since it is a United Nations Decade, all United Nations agencies need to mobilize to support and engage in activities to promote its ends. Countries need to be in the driver's seat for ensuring the implementation of the Decade at national level. UNESCO is committed to continuing to mobilize stakeholders to extend and deepen their engagement regarding education for sustainable development and to lead this global movement towards a successful completion of the Decade.